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Live Like You're Going to Die

Pat Sherwood explains the delicate balance between pupusa and push-ups.

By Pat Sherwood

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I wish I liked beer.

If I were presented only the following two options, my choice would be easy.

1. Live to be 100 and perfectly functional but never deviate from eating 100 percent clean, getting eight hours of REM sleep and avoiding risk at all cost.
2. Live to 75 while striking a balance between work and play, risk and reward, and eating clean and binging on junk food.

Give me Option 2, please. As a matter of fact, if we added a third choice of being a member of Mötley Crüe and dying at 60, I'd take that one!

I watch people enjoy an ice-cold beer on a hot day, and I'm insanely jealous. It looks so wonderful and refreshing. The expression of pleasure on their faces seems to be that of pure, genuine joy. It seems there are some events in this life that simply call for a cold beer: a backyard barbecue, a sporting event or finishing a long day of riding a motorcycle in the heat of Central America. It's at times like these that I feel I'm missing out.

The reason I don't drink beer has absolutely nothing to do with health or fitness. There's no big moral principle behind my decision; I just can't stand the taste. They say that beer is an acquired taste. Trust me, I've tried to acquire it, but it just never took. During seven years in special operations, I drank all the time because it was just what we did. Enjoying the taste was irrelevant, and not to drink with the boys would have undermined our bonding. So I drank ... plenty. But I never enjoyed a single sip.

Maybe I just haven't found the right brew. I'm open to suggestions, so feel free to post recommendations in the comments section.

On my current incredible CrossFit motorcycle adventure, I'm constantly exposed to new local food and drink at the affiliates we visit. Each country, region or town has some delicious delicacy that the local CrossFit athletes insist we try.

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The overwhelming majority of the food we've been offered is not suitable for a caveman. Sure, there have been grilled steaks, chicken and seafood that even the strictest nutrition-crazy athlete would have eaten gladly. However, that's been the exception.

The bulk of the "must try" local cuisine is carb-heavy, doughy, fried, greasy food served with some sort of sugary drink.

The conversation always takes the same path. A local CrossFit athlete says, "Oh! You have to try the ... ! They are so delicious and amazing! You will love them! But they're not great for the Zone, and you're from HQ, so you probably won't eat it." They are sincere when they say this, not sarcastic.

To their shock and delight, I inform them that just because I work at CrossFit HQ doesn't mean I'm a robot programmed to be 100 percent strict and correct seven days a week. Hell yes I want to try the local delicacies, and I don't give a shit what is or isn't Zone friendly!

In San Salvador, El Salvador, we crushed *pupusa* after *pupusa* (a thick corn tortilla) until our stomachs were going to burst. We washed them all down with three-to-four bottles of the local sugary soda drink. There were several we heard were good, so naturally we tried them all.

When we thought it was all over, we slumped back in our chairs with bellies distended from overeating. Carlos and the rest of the 1389 CrossFit crew looked at us and asked whether we had room for dessert. There is only one acceptable way to answer that question, and it's in the affirmative. Not one dessert was brought out but rather several. We ate them all. Dinner finished at about 10:45 p.m. That's when they informed us they would pick us up at our hotel at 6 a.m. sharp for a 7-km run up a volcano. If you think we felt like garbage on that run, you would be right. And it was 100 percent worth it.

Delicious food and drink have a huge social aspect in every country I've visited and every culture I've ever experienced. Nutrition is also at the bottom of Coach Greg Glassman's Theoretical Hierarchy of Development because nutritious food is required to fuel athletic performance.



Sherwood eats healthy much of the time but allows himself to experience the culture of Central America through local dishes.

But life is not only about Fran PRs and looking great naked. Life is also about being out at the restaurant or bar with great friends much later than you should be, laughing loudly, and consuming food and drink that was not chosen for its nutritional value.

All the CrossFit athletes I know work hard both inside and outside the gym. But don't forget that's only half of life. The other half is playing just as hard as you work. Find the balance that works for you.



About the Author

Pat Sherwood works for CrossFit as a flowmaster and member of the Media Team. He's done just under 200 seminars all around the globe for CrossFit HQ and competed in the 2009 CrossFit Games. He hates HSPU and loves ice cream.